

Harris, B.G. - MIA

FIR-317/09133-74

COUNTRY CAMBODIA
DOI MARCH 1971
SUBJECT AMERICAN CASUALTIES AND GRAVE SITES IN KRATIE
PROVINCE, CAMBODIA

ACQ

SOURCE

1. AT ABOUT 0800 HOURS ONE DAY IN EARLY MARCH 1971, A U.S. HELICOPTER CRASHED AT ABOUT XU480462 IN SNOL DISTRICT, KRATIE PROVINCE, CAMBODIA. IT HAD BEEN SHOT DOWN BY THE ANTRIAIRCRAFT (AA) COMPANY, 1ST REGIMENT, VIET CONG (VC) 5TH DIVISION. AT THE CRASH SITE, ABOUT AN HOUR AFTER THE DOWNING OF THE HELICOPTER, WERE ONE WOUNDED SOLDIER OF THE ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM (ARVN), THE BODY OF A DEAD AMERICAN AND THE BODIES OF SIX DEAD ARVN SOLDIERS. MEMBERS OF THE AA COMPANY REPORTED THE SAME DAY THAT THEY HAD KILLED TWO OTHER AMERICANS FROM THE DOWNED HELICOPTER DURING AN EXCHANGE OF GUNFIRE ABOUT 400 METERS SOUTHEAST OF THE CRASH SITE. HOWEVER, ONE AMERICAN HAD ESCAPED AND WAS CAPTURED LATER THAT DAY IN THE AREA OF THE CRASH SITE. THE WOUNDED ARVN SOLDIER SAID THAT THE HELICOPTER HAD BEEN ON A MISSION WITH THE 8TH BATTLE GROUP OF THE ARVN 5TH DIVISION TO ATTACK THE VC 5TH DIVISION HEADQUARTERS ABOUT 500 METERS NORTH OF THE CRASH SITE.
2. THE DAY AFTER THE CRASH, THE U.S. PRISONER OF WAR (POW) WAS SENT TO AN UNKNOWN DESTINATION BY THE ENEMY PROSLEYTING

SECTION OF THE VC 5TH DIVISION. ONE OF THE AMERICAN BODIES WAS BURIED NEAR THE CRASH SITE AND THE TWO OTHERS WERE BURIED ABOUT 400 METERS TO THE SOUTHEAST BY AA COMPANY SOLDIERS.

3. THE AMERICAN POW AND CASUALTIES WERE ALL CAUCASIANS. THE PRISONER WAS ABOUT 25 YEARS OLD, HEIGHED ABOUT 85 KILOGRAMS AND WAS ABOUT 1.75 METERS TALL. HE HAD BROWN CREW-CUT HAIR AND WAS WEARING GREEN FATIGUES. HE DID NOT HAVE VISIBLE WOUNDS. THE AMERICAN WHO WAS KILLED AND BURIED AT THE CRASH SITE WAS ABOUT 30 YEARS OF AGE, HEIGHED ABOUT 92 KILOGRAMS, WAS ABOUT 1.80 METERS TALL AND WAS DRESSED IN GREEN FATIGUES. HE HAD BEEN WEARING HEADGEAR WITH EARPONES. [REDACTED] COMMENT [REDACTED] REVIEWED BOTH VOLUMES OF "PRISONERS OF WAR AND MISSING IN ACTION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA" BUT COULD IDENTIFY NEITHER THE AMERICAN POW NOR THE DEAD AMERICAN HE HAD SEEN. [REDACTED] SAID THAT HE WOULD BE ABLE TO POINT OUT THE GENERAL AREA OF THE BURIAL SITES BUT THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO RETURN TO THE AREA BECAUSE IT WAS UNDER KHMER INSURGENT CONTROL. HOWEVER, HE SAID THAT HE WOULD RETURN TO THE AREA IF NECESSARY AND IF HE WERE PROVIDED WITH PROTECTION.)

4. [REDACTED] COMMENT: THE JOINT CASUALTY RESOLUTION CENTER (JCRC) EVALUATES THIS REPORT AS FOLLOWS, THE SAME JCRC COMMENTARY

HAVING BEEN PROVIDED FOR [REDACTED] 16 MARCH 1974, FIR-317/09110-74: "TH REPORT PROBABLY CORRELATES TO THE INCIDENT INVOLVING ARMY WARRANT OFFICER (WOT) JAMES HARDY HESTAND (REFNO: 1727-1-04), A RELEASEE. WO 1 HESTAND WAS THE COPILOT OF A UH-1 HELICOPTER DOWNED BY GROUND FIRE ON 17 MARCH 1971 AT XU482458. THREE OTHER PERSONNEL WERE ABOARD THE HELICOPTER AT THE TIME OF THE LOSS:

A. ARMY WO 2 RICHARD BAUMAN, PILOT MIA (REFNO: 1727-2-01).

B. ARMY SP 4 BOBBY G. HARRIS, CREWMAN, MIA (REFNO: 1727-2-02).

C. ARMY SP 4 CRAIG M. DIX, CREW CHIEF, MIA (REFNO: 1727-2-03).

WO 1 HESTAND, A RELEASEE, PROVIDED THE MOST INFORMATION ABOUT THIS INCIDENT. HE SAID THAT SP 4 DIX, ALTHOUGH WOUNDED IN THE UPPER RIGHT ANKLE, WAS AMBULATORY AND EVADING AT THE TIME OF HESTAND'S CAPTURE. HESTAND ALSO REMARKED THAT WHEN LAST SEEN, WO 2 BAUMAN WAS ALIVE IN GOOD CONDITION AND WAS HIDING WITH DIX. IN HIS HOMECOMING BRIEFING, HESTAND SAID THAT SP 4 HARRIS IS DEAD. WHEN HESTAND, BAUMAN AND DIX INITIALLY EXITED THE AIRCRAFT, HESTAND WENT TO THE PLACE WHERE HARRIS' BODY HAD BEEN THROWN. HE

FIR-317/09132-74

NOTICED THROAT LACERATIONS AND DISCOLORATION OF THE BODY WHICH,
IN HIS OPINION, INDICATED DEATH. JCRC CONTINUES TO CARRY THE MAN
IN A STATUS OF MISSING IN ACTION.")

5 [REDACTED] DISSEM: DEFENSE ATTACHE FOR JCRC REPRESENTATIVE IN
SAIGON; SENT TO CINCPAC (FOR CINCPAC AND POLAD ONLY) USSAG AND
VIENTIANE (FOR JCRC REPRESENTATIVE ONLY).